



Developing and Implementing Digital Literacy Professional Learning Workshops for Teachers in Regional and Remote High Schools

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Introduction

Digital Divide

The digital divide can be thought of as the gap between those that have ready access to digital technologies and those that have not. Further distinction is made between two levels of digital divide. The first level of digital divide is known to encompass access to bandwidth and affordable technology. The second level includes skills and meaningful knowledge that allow utilisation of information and communication technology (ICT) (Wei & Hindman, 2011).

Digital Literacy

Digital literacy can mean different things depending on the discipline, however, it can be referred to commonly as “an individual’s capacity to competently navigate digital information resources to arrive at a point that adds value to their perspective; whether it be social, educational, economic or ideational,” (Musarrat et al., 2017).

Regional and Remote Schools

While it is acknowledged that there is a growing gap in the digital divide between students from low socioeconomic background and the rest of the general student population (Russo et al., 2016), students from schools in low socioeconomic status (SES) living in regional and remote areas face even greater disadvantage due to a range of factors that combine to further widen the gap.

The LEAP-LINKS Digital Literacy Program

Teacher Training Workshops

LEAP stands for Learning, Education, Aspiration and Participation. In addressing the digital divide for low SES students in regional and remote, the LEAP-Links Digital Literacy program began as a pilot program under Commonwealth’s National Priorities Pool (NPP) Grant. The program ran teacher professional development workshops, which had been accredited by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) and were created with the help of subject matter experts and those that have lived experience in low socioeconomic regional and remote school communities.

Two key objectives of the LEAP- Links Digital Literacy Program

To assist regional and remote low SES students to build digital competencies needed to succeed in school and transition to higher education

To enhance support to regional and remote low SES students by identifying and addressing digital skill gaps for teachers and students

These were achieved by:

- Identifying and addressing digital literacy needs of teachers and students through qualitative surveys, expert panels and literature reviews.
- Three face-to-face registered NESA-accredited workshops were delivered in 3 schools, across 3 NSW regions that included: North Coast, Central West and Far West
- A total of 18 teachers from 6 different schools participated in the workshops.
- Participating teachers were credited 7 hours for the program in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). 5.5hrs for face-to-face workshop time and 1.5hrs for the follow-on online unit.

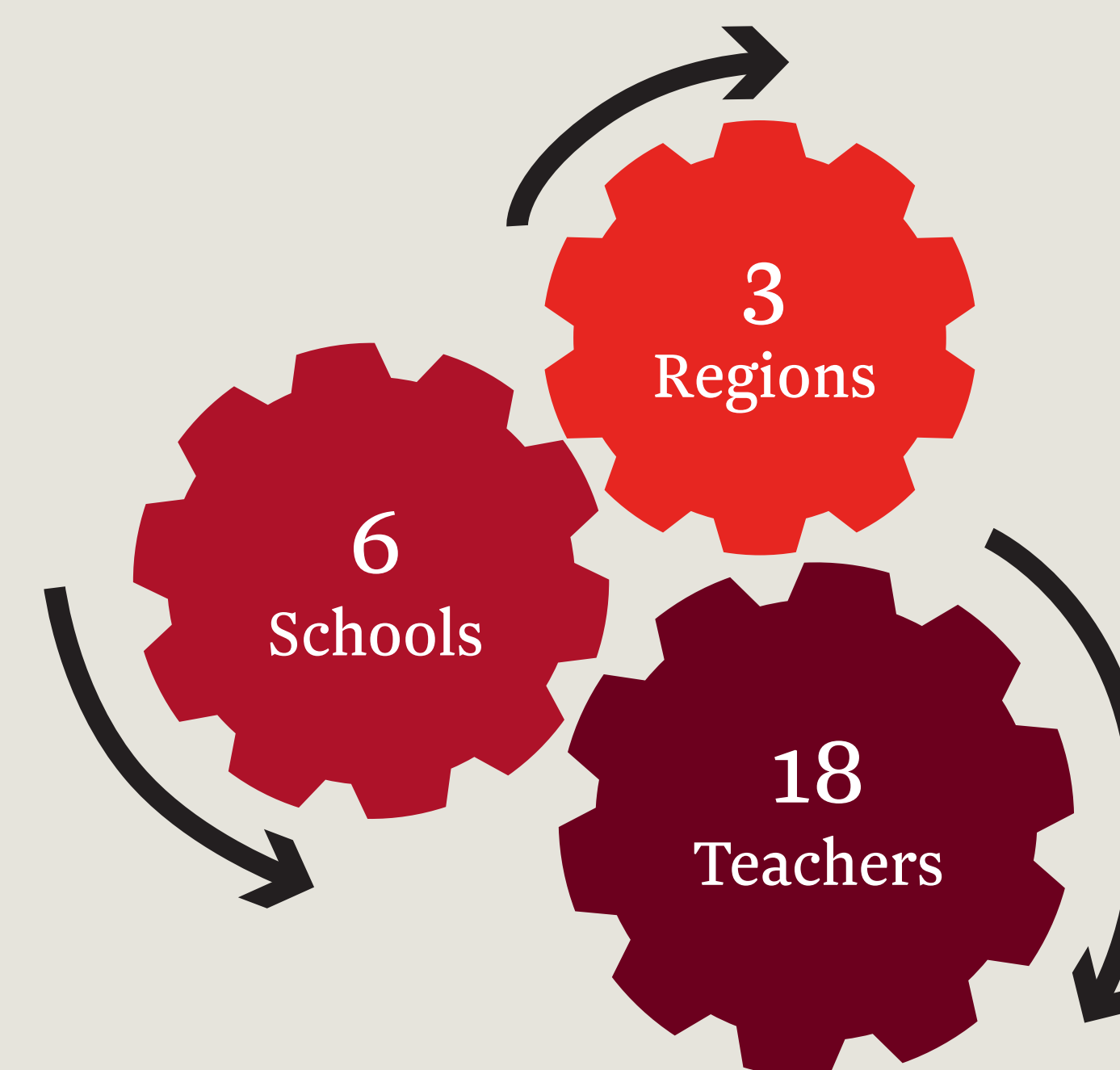
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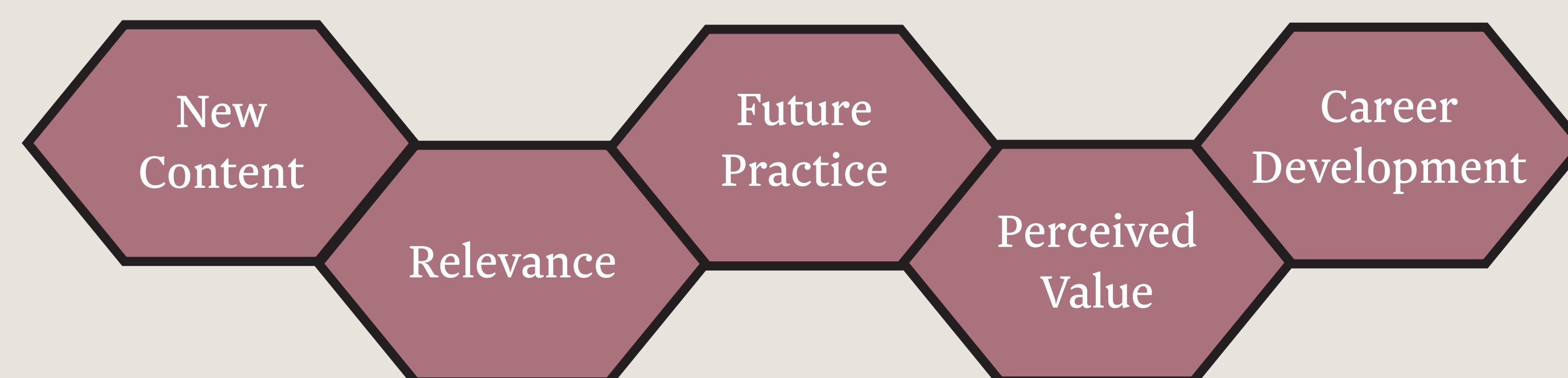
Outcomes



“It was excellent! Perhaps make it longer!”
“Provide more opportunities to expand on what was learnt today.”

Participating Teachers

95% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed the workshops met the following criteria.



Most Valued Outcomes

Participating teachers identified the workshops as having provided the following valuable outcomes:

1. Exposure to different tools and platforms
2. Wealth of Information
3. SAMR teaching and learning model
4. Engaging with Supportive Teacher Networks
5. Hands on Experience

“Brilliant ideas ... now want to have applying support”

Participating Teacher

Further Discussion and Feedback

While the workshops in the pilot program received overwhelming positive feedback from participating teachers, there were also valuable feedback that touched on the need for future support and application of the skills and knowledge gained. This feedback will allow any future versions of the program to be improved.

Since at the end of the pilot program in 2018 the Academy of Continuing Professional Development in Education in the Department of Educational Studies at Macquarie University will be delivering the LEAP – Digital Literacy (Teacher PD) program to schools situated in low socio-economic communities.

If you would like to find out more about the program or how you could contribute, please contact Macquarie University’s Widening Participation Unit at wpu@mq.edu.au or the Academy at acpde@mq.edu.au.